



DIOMEDEA CAUTA, *Gould.*

Cautious Albatros.

Diomedea cauta, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part VIII. p. 177.

I FIRST observed this noble species of Albatros off the south coast of Van Diemen's Land, and during my stay in Recherche Bay, at the southern entrance of D'Entrecasteaux's Channel, where I was wind-bound for nearly a fortnight, I had frequent opportunities of observing it. Unlike other Albatroses, I found this a most difficult bird to procure, for, as its name implies, it would seldom approach a ship or boat sufficiently near for a successful shot: I succeeded, however, in shooting several examples while they were flying round the Bay in which we had taken shelter. It is not usual for Albatroses to approach the land or enter a secluded bay like that of Recherche, and I attribute this deviation from the ordinary habits to the temptation presented to the bird by the vast quantities of fat and other remains of Whales floating about, the locality in question being one of the principal whaling stations on the coast of Van Diemen's Land; I have no doubt likewise that they were breeding on the Mewstone and other isolated rocks in the neighbourhood, as the plumage of some of the specimens I procured indicated that they had lately been engaged in the task of incubation.

It is a large and powerful bird, the male being scarcely a third less in size than the *D. exulans*; it is also rapid and vigorous on the wing, and takes immense sweeps over the surface of the ocean. It will be interesting to learn the extent of the range of this species: no one of our voyagers, from Cook to the commanders of expeditions of the present time, have brought a skin, or so far as I am aware have mentioned it. With the exception of those I killed myself off the southern coast of Van Diemen's Land, a solitary head is all that I have observed in any collection; this head, which is in the possession of Sir William Jardine, was said to have been procured at the Cape of Good Hope, but I believe this was by no means certain.

When fully adult the sexes differ but little in colour; the female may, however, at all times be distinguished by her diminutive size, and the young by the bill being clouded with dark grey.

The beautiful grey on the sides of the mandibles, the delicate pale yellow of the culmen, and the yellow mark at the base of the lower mandible will at all times distinguish this bird from the other members of the genus.

The stomachs of those I obtained in Recherche Bay contained blubber, the remains of large fish, and barnacles.

Crown of the head, back of the neck, throat, all the under surface, rump and upper tail-coverts pure white; lores and line over the eye greyish black, gradually passing into the delicate pearl-grey which extends over the face; back, wings and tail greyish brown; irides dark vinous orange; bill light vinous grey, or bluish horn-colour, except on the culmen, where it is more yellow, particularly at the base; the upper mandible surrounded at the base by a narrow belt of black, which also extends on each side the culmen to the nostrils; base of the lower mandible surrounded by a belt of rich orange, which extends to the corners of the mouth; feet bluish white; irides brown.

The figures in the Plate are somewhat less than two-thirds of the natural size.